

# Welcome to Vastral's Guide to Magical Oddities Sampler

Inside you will find pages taken from the first two volumes of these magic item collections. Those pages include eleven of the items, chosen partly as good examples and partly on the whim of the author - that's me. I will admit that *Kiss of the Queen* and the *Biscuit Shield* are two of my favourite items (what that says about me I'm not sure).

What I can say though is that I think Dalma Vadra is a pretty cool deity (the name was suggested by a backer) and the biscuit shield picture makes me laugh a little every time I see it. Reason enough to include them I think in this free sampler.

I've also included the introduction from the first book that outlines my views on magic items and the design thinking behind the books, as well as some of the introductory scenes involving Vastral (mage), Abrina (vampire) and Rutus (minotaur who is referred to only).

Why the sampler? Well, it's nice to share and if you picked up this book in a gameshop and were considering buying it, you'd have a flick through first. Consider this sampler your way of flicking through the book - with the added advantage of being able to keep some of the pages as well!

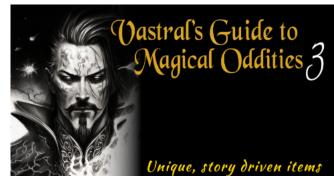
These eleven items cover the range of topics that you get in each of the books. We expect you will be able to find lots of interesting uses for them in your adventures. The chapter categories were chosen to provide readers of the book with a broader range than is usually encountered in similar works. Enjoy using the items creatively!

Stephen Hart February 2023

Both these books are available to purchase at www.thegrinningfrog.com

From 17 January to 17 February 2023 on Kickstarter Vastral's Guide to Magical Oddities 3

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/thegrinningfrog/vastrals-guide-to-magical-oddities-3-for-5e





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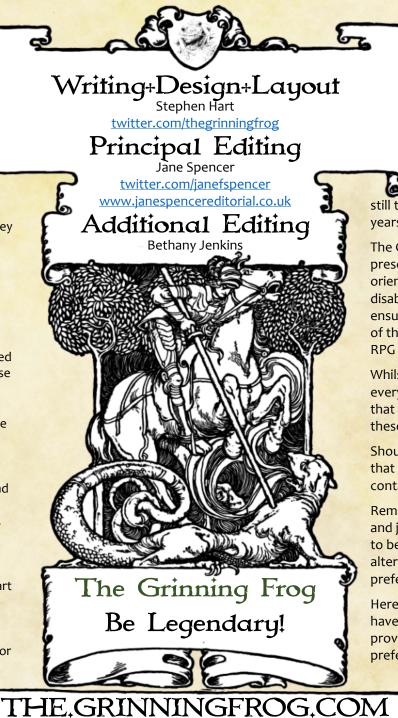
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Produced in the UK.



#### Inclusivity

Anyone properly involved in the gaming community will know that inclusivity is lacking. There are frequent posts on social media from individuals feeling left out or sidelined because they feel underrepresented in RPG material for a wide variety of reasons. The situation is better than it was five years ago, and better

still than when the author got into the hobby thirty odd years ago, but clearly it isn't where it should be yet.

The Grinning Frog commits to making every effort to present characters reflecting all sexualities and orientations. We will also present individuals with disabilities, both physical and mental, along with ensuring we reflect the wonderful ethnicities and looks of the real world and project them into our amazing RPG ones.

Whilst doing the above, we will strive to portray everyone as an individual and not a label, with the aim that everyone can find someone they can relate to in these pages.

Should you ever feel that we have written something that does not reflect well on a group of people, then contact us and we will review it.

Remember, roleplay games are games of imagination, and just as we advocate you change any of the content to better fit your game and story situation, feel free to alter the nature of the content to suit your needs and preferences.

Here at The Grinning Frog, we strive to help everyone have a more positive gaming experience. Take what we provide in that spirit and adapt it to suit your preferences.

# lelcome

I need to tell you something, something that's burning in my chest and I need to share with you. I'd like to make magic items magical.

I'd like the stories we tell the players about Jasandra, the legendary thief who wore the Cloak of Shadows, to move and excite them. Make them think 'Wow, I want to be able to do that.' And then, when they finally acquire the Cloak of Shadows, I want it to work in the way it was described in the stories.

Because then the player can live out that mini fantasy they had in their head. The one where their character teleports around the room into pools of shadows and confounds and then defeats the villains.

Why?

Because it's cool and it's magical. And it will make the player happy.

And, yes, I apologise for all the italics but I'm passionate here and I want to emphasise that. (Jane, my wonderful editor, will no doubt tell me off for it, but they are staying!)

Maybe it's just me, but I play fantasy roleplay games because of the magic, the excitement and the larger-than-life exploits. I work really hard to write and design the best content I can produce, because I want other people to take it, read it and use it with joy and excitement.

Let me tell you something else. Three years ago I started a project to create 500 magic items. The plan was to sell all of them at once, because, you know, volume sells. Lots of magic bang for your buck and all that.

And I wrote them all. A little over 500 in fact. It took me a year.

And they were dull, lifeless and, frankly, a disappointment.

Until I brought them to life for myself by ignoring the mechanics, reversing my workflow and adding the stories.

You see, fantasy roleplay games shouldn't be a spreadsheet exercise, they should be a storytelling exercise. An honest one, however. The story should match the mechanics when the mechanics arrive. And arrive they must, for this is a game we are playing, and that requires rules, checks and boundaries.

So each magic item in this book has been born out of story. A story crafted, shaped and written before the mechanics were considered.

Then, in a blended writing process, I went back through each entry and added mechanics that matched the stories, created damage, ageing and repair, and mechanic specifics, then considered copies that might logically be made of the item. Next I chose where they might be found. Somewhere in all that I thought about their reputations. And then I considered if I should name some specific owners of the items, and that prompted me to check back with the story and complete the circle. A creative ouroboros if you will.

I tell you all this so you know that these items have been forged in the furnace of imagination, hammered out on the anvil of story, and etched with the fine detail of mechanics.

Everything in here has been written with the love of the magical, with the intent and hope that it will give you the means to create wonder and joy for your players. (And feel free to change everything – something I talk about in the section on mechanics!)

If you play 5th edition Dungeons and Dragons you will find the mechanics fully compatible. If you play a different fantasy RPG you will find the stories fully compatible.

So, other than story, how do I think you can make magic items magical?

In brief – keep their frequency limited, have the bad guys use them against the player characters, provide backgrounds for the items that match the powers, and make the players have to work hard before their characters earn any items.

To give you an idea of what not to do, of the 200 adventure hooks in this book, I'm pretty sure exactly none of them refer to finding the item in a treasure trove. Even the item that's found lying on the ground is under a wrecked wagon, with a dead horse, a mysteriously missing person and strange feathers on the ground.

Create stories with the items. Your players will love you for it.

Stephen May 2021

# Vastral and his guest

In-character writing can be fun to read, but it can overstep its welcome. Vastral comments from time to time on the items themselves, and we have his thoughts introducing the chapters, each of which focuses on a specific type of item.

Joining him is a guest, whom I hope long-time readers of my publications will welcome back - Abrina.

There is a danger of being self-indulgent when you're a writer. I had no plans to bring Abrina back for this publication, and were it not for a surprise comment from my wife which corrected me as to the actual moral of the story in Rosaceae Dress, I wouldn't have done so.

Being rather cleverly corrected over my own story made me think that a different perspective, from time to time, would liven things up a bit. If I have misjudged it and she is a poor addition, then I apologise. Feel free to ignore her. (Although don't tell her I said that.)

In my defence, once she arrives, she is hard to get rid of. You know how it is with vampires.

And, just in case anyone reading this is wondering, the conversations in this book take place after The Three Trials of Abrina. Abrina is no longer confined to the location mentioned in that adventure. She is not, however, 'officially' free, a point which doesn't seem to be bothering Vastral much. Which, as he represents the council that imprisoned her in the first place, you have to wonder about...

#### Vastral, male, human, mage

Vastral is a council member of the Cabal of Propadol, an eclectic group of magic users and eldritch powers who take the view that creating magical rituals, spells and protections isn't enough. That magic then needs to be tested.

They do this through creating challenge tombs - locations specifically created to test a small party of adventurers or warriors, or just the unlucky who were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Magic is, after all, just another resource for sale or hire, and the cabal offered a way to demonstrate that magical defences or items were effective in real combat situations. If this became entertaining to watch, that was just a profitable bonus.

Vastral directly oversees several of these tombs,

a logical position given his extensive practical knowledge of adventuring and magical research. A capable mage in his own right, he is focused now on gaining patrons for the cabal and conducting his own research into magical items.

He sees the two tasks as connected. The greater the number of patrons for the cabal, the more people who know his name and who can help him locate items or perhaps purchase new ones from him. He keeps his ultimate end game close to his chest.

Classically trained and well travelled, he can be high-handed and disturbingly cold at times. At other times he shows a more caring side. A man to be wary of, but he does know his magic items!



#### Abrina, female, vampire magika\*, ex-adventurer

Abrina was a contestant in a challenge tomb. It didn't go well for her, and she was transformed into a vampire magika by the cabal and condemned to act as a host in the tomb she had died in. She was reportedly killed by a group of challengers. She was not. She escaped.

Vastral alone on the council is aware of this, but he has taken no steps to apprehend her, even putting up with the occasional social visit from her.

Disrespectful and sarcastic, she has seen the worst of life and has a chip on her shoulder.

\*Created by magic

# Tet's Talk Mechanics

Rules as written have a weight. There is an assumption that what is written down is the correct and absolute form of the item. At least in my mind; I don't know about you. If you are cool with looking at a magic item and thinking 'Could be another d6 of damage on that' or 'I'd have gone for stunned not incapacitated', then you can probably skip this section.

For everyone else, like me, who is going to read this book and feel the weight of my assigned statistics, please listen carefully, I will say this only once... Change anything you want.

Yup, truly. Feel absolutely comfortable that if, for your mind, in your game world, an item as written doesn't fit and needs to be changed, then change it. With my blessing.

I've spent hundreds of hours on this book, and if I say you can alter things any way you want, then you can bloomin' well do it!

Every writer of an RPG supplement works from a particular perspective. We have a scale of limits in our headspace, and that translates onto the page as limits on bonuses and negatives. (These limits are based on the official rules but interpreted through our own perspectives.)

You won't find a +4 weapon in here. For me, +3 is as sharp and deadly as it can get – okay, with the weapon attribute added in. But it's still capped at +3, even when a weapon has been gifted by the goddess of death herself (Kiss of the Queen).

If you want to bump that up, go for it.

You won't find a single item in here that is class-locked. I don't feel that magic works like that – or at least, not for this book. If Vastral wants to talk about bard only items and how they affect bardic inspiration, then maybe that will come up in a future publication.

Similarly, any level can have any item in this book. Not that I'm recommending that they do. For example, there are four items that get more powerful when the character who owns them levels up – Oni Helm, Good Boy Shield, Mantel of Arafel and Bow of Larthrae.

Increasing in levels is one thing when you're talking about the slower progression from 11th to 12th level, and another from 1st to 2nd. (See Heirloom Items for more details.)

You will want to use your DM discretion as to who gets what and when. And that should hold true for the other items too. You decide when they crop up, based on your adventure and your party.

As to where these items are found, given the detailed backstories that the majority are presented with, I'd love to imagine that your players are encountering some of them during the stories told. Change the timelines, have the civil war (Raiments of the Golden Empress) happening currently, and get the party caught up in it. Have them staying at Greyholm's Tower when it is attacked (Greyholm's Armour) or in the audience when King Reynard is lied to by his wife and brother (Torch of Lenara).

The detailed backstories are what makes this book different to other magic item books. Draw on the material provided and have the acquisition of the party's next magic item be more than opening another chest in another dungeon.

#### 'But DM, I wanted a spear!'

Players. They want what they want. I've tried hard to present a range of weapon types, but this isn't a book on magic weapons. It's a book on magical oddities which happens to have some (quite a few) weapons.

So, if someone wants a trident, then feel free to change the shape of one of the items. Maybe the item rewards the character after the next major victory by transforming into the weapon type they wanted, or you might just present that weapon type up front when the weapon is first encountered by the character. It's up to you.

#### The universe gives and takes

You will see, with the variations and the repaired items, that often an increase in powers in one area results in a decrease somewhere else.

I create items from the outside in. In other words, I think 'How big and baddass is this item?' and then I work down into the powers.

Once that initial scale is cast in my head, it rarely changes. So if the powers do, there needs to be a give and take. As an example, the *Phoenix*Cage can be repaired with four different items.

One of those increases the attack damage by 50%, but the balance is that the phoenix trapped inside has a 10% chance of escaping each time the attack ability is used.

If you are going to make further variations of the items, may I suggest you follow that design philosophy.

From my design perspective, you have in here the most powerful versions of these items. Variations that are more powerful effectively create a new item.



#### Bad guys love magic items too

I'm not getting into the 'guns don't kill people' argument because a) this isn't the place and b) we all know the answer – people kill people with guns because it's easier to kill people when you have a gun. And if you are a villain (to bring us back to our fantasy worlds) you are probably going to equip yourself with the biggest and baddest items available.

And not just the obviously offensive ones. You might use a *Phatidae Throne* to get the edge over people when negotiating with them, or an *Ever Empty Chest* to hide your misbegotten gains from the authorities.

Some of the stories even present items that are directly in the hands of those we could classically consider 'villains' – the Cauldron of the Damned is still owned by the Dark Queen, and the Empress, who wears the Raiments of the Golden Empress, is at the very least a strict ruler. Although the word dictator might be more accurate. You have a read and see what you think.

Many items are, of course, quite neutral in their nature. The Anvil of The Gods and the Black Rum Carriage are tools that anyone could use, as are the wonderfully named Oda's Small-Pouch Root-Cellars for the Road.

Do your stories a favour and have those in the hands of both villains and neutral NPCs. Why find a rare item sitting in a treasure trove when the town mage could be using it? Which, in the case of Oda's item, gives you a ton of scope for filling it with something... interesting!



# Rarity

#### Rarity

I have written at some length about this topic in Abracadabra: A Guide to Becoming A Legendary Games Master. Rather than repeat that, let me outline how I've interpreted rarity for Vastral's Guide. In short, I have attempted to accurately reflect the background story.

So, the Blade of Orcini is 'legendary – unique', because there is only one of them. The one the aforementioned assassin Orcini himself used. Brockheim's Plate is 'rare' because the story describes prototypes having been made, and there is an implication that copies have been made since.

You have to use some common sense. Jasandra only owned one cloak, so her personal Jasandra's Cloak of Many Shadows is unique, but because the story refers to other copies being made, the overall entry is recorded as 'rare'.

As mentioned on the other page, the stats presented are the most powerful version of the item. If you want to decide that Jasandra's personal cloak was more powerful than the other ones, then slightly downscale the abilities for the copies rather than scaling up for Jasandra.

At least that's my recommendation. As I started with in this section, do as thou wilt.

My recommendation here is based on the design principles I was working to. I wasn't trying to make anything game-breaking or entirely broken. I believe all the items in here to be balanced at the right level of gameplay.

(Level one characters should not play with the Kiss of the Queen – they'll just cut themselves and get into trouble!)



# Damage and Repairs

Great magic stories come from magic items being broken. Lord of the Rings could be argued to be the longest and most complicated trip to a workshop ever.

My approach to magic items is that they are *made* by someone. That is, they are the product of a manufacturing process. And therefore, like any manufactured item, sometimes you get something built by a craftsperson at the top of their game, and sometimes you get something cobbled together by the new apprentice.

Similarly, what can be made can be unmade. A perfect gem used to create a *Villum* Ring is going to be vulnerable to being scratched or otherwise damaged, especially if the owner is an active adventuring wizard. Repairing or replacing the gem might be necessary at some point, and that immediately creates story points. (At the other end of the process, the raw materials for the items need to be sourced by someone.)

And, finally, finding a less than perfect item would mean that, over time, if the character chooses to get it repaired, they gain something more powerful – a reward for their efforts.

In the entries in this book I refer to three levels of item damage:

- **Slightly** Anything less than this does not affect the operating of the item.
- Moderately Some of the more fragile items start here when less than perfect. You aren't missing information – it was a design choice.
- Heavily Anything more than this level of damage and the item is destroyed

It's up to you to determine how the item looks at each damage level.

# Heirloom Items

This is a type of item that gains powers as the character gains levels. It grows with the person. This association is tracked over what are called Ownership Levels. All items start at the first level and then go to second and onwards.

This reflects the continued bonding between the item and the person. As such, if I were the DM, I would be expecting the character to have to use the item most (not all) of the time to gain the next level.

The ownership levels do not have to be given out one-for-one with character experience levels. You might decide to require two or more experience levels to pass before the character unlocks the next ownership level.

Personally, I do not tell the character about the heirloom nature of the item. It's a great moment at the table when the item does something new. Although, to avoid disappointment, I do tell them when it has reached its level limit and I would urge you to do the same.

For clarity, let me state here that when an item increases in level it retains the previous level's abilities, unless the new ability is simply an improvement – Good Boy Shield. Occasionally new powers are unlocked – Bow of Larthrae.

If item if passed to an ally mid-battle, I would imagine it operating at its current ownership level, but if permanently gifted to someone it would reset to level one.



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# Collars of Damnation

istory

Fiends are known as such because of their innate wickedness and low cunning. This item was created with pure malicious pleasure by a demon prince who revelled in inflicting unexpected and unforeseen woes on mortals.

Collars of Damnation are dark black and red leather collars with evil symbols carved into the hide, sometimes hidden on the underside of the collar. They are typically found on devil dogs and hell hounds.

Whilst they are to be avoided, some people want them for their own dark reasons and copies of them have made their way into the hands of the less scrupulous and less moral on the mortal plane.

Legend has it that a demon king crafted the first three of these for his personal triple-headed devil hound. That beast, the size of a pony, would march with his master on their unholy campaigns against the forces of the divine.

When the hound finally fell in battle, the bodies of a dozen angelic warriors lay around it, savaged and ripped open, their souls cursed for millennia by the original collars.

No one knows what became of those first collars, but in the long years since, many lesser copies have been found in use by infernal princes and generals, their prized attack hounds driven into an even greater killing fervour by the dark magic contained within them.

Whilst the originals contained curses that only a demigod could lift, the copies are less potent but still unpleasant.





Known and reviled, these collars are outlawed by all civilised societies. Amongst demons they are seen as a status symbol.



# amage and Repairs

These do not wear out through normal use but rather will be damaged or destroyed in battle.

#### When damaged

- Moderately 1d6 on use, 1-2 fails to activate
- Heavily 1d6 on use, 1-2 fails to activate

Repairing The collars are forged from the hides of traitorous demons and that is the best leather to use to mend them.

- Demon leather this can be stitched in to fix a broken collar, but it would take a demon mage to fully empower the collar. Effectiveness is reduced by a quarter when a non-demon does the repairs.
- Skin of a sacrificial beast the victim must not want to be sacrificed for this to work, and it will never match a demon hide collar. Effectiveness is halved.



The original three had the power to curse angelic souls to millennia of damnation - the mortal realm is glad they are lost to myth and legend. Only lesser versions now exist which are copied to plague mortals.



#### **location**

They are only made on the hellscape. Any that exist in the mortal realm have been found, purchased in trade, or captured in battle. (Those last ones tend to be destroyed, along with the carcasses of the hounds which were wearing them.)



Wondrous item, uncommon (attunement required), dog only

#### All collars provide +2 AC

#### **Abilities**

There are three different collars. One collar can be worn for each head the hound has. When a hound with fewer than three heads is encountered, roll to determine which ones are present.

#### Collar One - Sinister Curse

When a creature is bitten, they must make a DC 25 **Wisdom** save or be cursed. When cursed they cannot be raised from the dead. Once cursed, the individual makes a Wisdom check: a result of 24 or higher reveals the nature of the curse, whilst a result between 20-23 only informs the victim that they have been cursed in some fashion. Should another individual attempt to identify the curse then their check is made with disadvantage. The curse lasts for twelve months. A raise dead spell cast on the individual whilst they are living has a 20% chance of ending the curse.

#### Collar Two - Dexter Curse

The creature bitten is blinded and loses all ability to see.

#### Collar Three - Medio Curse

The creature becomes maddened with a hunger for human flesh. The victim must make a DC 24 Charisma save or attack the nearest human and attempt to bite them. They must repeat this check every eight hours. The curse lasts for twelve months.

Dexter and Medio curses can only be lifted early through bathing in holy water and resting for 24 hours.

Note All collars enable the creature to make a bonus bite attack each round.



# Mantle of Arafel

Petitioning the divine powers for aid is not an uncommon activity – every penitent sinner and every weary cleric has offered up a prayer to the divine on more than one occasion.

When Sir Gadfell entered the ancient shrine, mosscovered and ruined inside the shattered remains of Star Bright Keep, he didn't really expect an answer, and he certainly didn't expect what happened after he prayed. He was desperate and heartsick from the latest setback in his effort to rally the people of the Five Kingdoms.

He sought guidance and wisdom, and he got it in the most direct of ways. The celestial being Arafel descended from the heavens (literally), her light blinding him and causing him to stagger back in awe and a little fear.

She calmed him and told him she was there to help. He knelt before her, bowing his head and shivering in the cold of the night. She laid her hand on his head, smiling benevolently, then unclipped her cloak and laid it around his shoulders. She bade him rise and motioned for him to sit with her at the foot of a broken statue. Then they began to talk, and when they finished the dawn sun could be seen through the cracks in the walls.

To this day he hasn't told a living soul the full details of the conversation he had with her. But since that meeting, his martial wisdom, insight and perception on and off the battlefield has achieved the impossible – a united Five Kingdoms. Together, the kingdoms now have a real chance at successfully opposing the invasion of the famorians and their aberrant allies, although many battles and challenges still lie ahead. Victory isn't certain, but the people know that Sir Gadfell will be leading the way.

Lenara, Arafel... it makes me nervous when celestial beings get so directly involved.

Oh, I'm not afraid. More... sensibly cautious. And in my experience, they do tend to complicate matters. For creatures who are so rigid in their thinking, they are hard to predict. And when you can't predict the actions of the people you are dealing with, that gets... tricky.





### eputation

An inspiring and hopeful item for everyone of good intent in the Five Kingdoms.



# lamage and Repairs

It is not possible for mortals to repair this item.



Envied but not yet copied, yet there are dark whispers that the infernal forces are creating an opposing item. It has not yet been unleashed on the world.

### ocation

Currently in use by Sir Gadfell as he defends the Five Kingdoms, however similar events, although rare, have occurred between celestials and mortals in other locations.



Wondrous item, legendary, unique (attunement required), good alignment only, cannot be worn by infernal or undead beings

+1 Insight, +1 Persuasion

#### **Abilities - First Ownership Level**

1. The wearer has advantage on all Insight checks.

#### **Abilities - Second Ownership Level**

- 1. Stat bonuses increase by 1
- 2. For one combat per day the wearer becomes resistant to non-magical weapons

#### **Abilities - Third Ownership Level**

- 1. Stat bonuses increase by 1
- 2. For one combat per day the wearer becomes immune to non-magical weapons

#### **Abilities - Fourth Ownership Level**

The character must have worn the cloak through four consecutive levels of play to access this ownership level.

- 1. \_The cloak/halo confers Truesight to the wearer once per day for five minutes. This power refreshes at dawn on the following day.
- 2. Due to the long association with the cloak and the good deeds done by the character, the powers become part of them. They may now pass on the physical cloak to another person if they so wish, but the initial character retains all the abilities of the mantle as a divine boon. It manifests itself as a halo when the power is active. The cloak cannot be passed onto another member of the party but rather must go to a worthy stranger. It can also be returned to Arafel if so wished.

#### Additional DM Notes

The transition from cloak to halo for the character should be hard earned and a significant gaming moment. It is also not unreasonable to require some divine tasks to be set to gain ownership levels, as well as levelling up. The character should generally live a moral and, above all, honest life. Arafel believes in the power of truth and honest living. She would expect the highest standards from the wearer of her mantle.

For added detail we can share that Arafel's colours are blue (associated with honesty) and white (purity), hence the blue barding on the horse.



# Arm of Nambrion

Skill does not equate to bravery, nor bravery to skill. Sometimes the best of us are the least of us, as the history of this item will show.

Beritz is a long-standing mage in a busy, metropolitan city deep in a dangerous vale. The city is the largest civilised settlement for hundreds of miles. As such, it is often the target for creature incursions and attacks and has been sacked twice in its history. Some of the dangers come from within as well.

To aid in his research, Beritz has previously consulted with demonic forces. This has not always gone well, and it took a forceful intervention by a group of adventurers to save him and gain his commitment to not do so again.

Whilst a powerful mage, he is also cowardly and easily cowed. When the adventurers were there he was more than happy to agree to never consult with the infernal realm again. But after they had been absent from the city for some time, the thoughts of his old contacts and what he could learn kept coming back to him.

It was four weeks before the temptation became too strong, prompted by a failed attempt to perfect a teleportation spell he was working on. He decided to reach out to his 'other contacts' and run the spell by them. He reasoned that with some added security nothing would go wrong.

Accordingly, he hired two expensive mercenaries, newly arrived in town, and he had his assistant, Franz, tidy and prepare his chamber for the summoning.

It all started well, and then the succubus demon he was talking with started to get... friendly. This was always a weakness of his, and soon his focus was wavering and his guard was down.

The demon presented the case for a visit to explore the situation in person. Without due thought Beritz agreed, imagining she meant to come to our plane. He was wrong.

He also overlooked that such an agreement would lessen his protections.

With a vicious howl, a portal of hellfire sprang up around Beritz, burning through his wards. As the stench of sulphur filled the air, demonic arms and tentacles reached up through the fire and grabbed for him. The succubus had dropped her glamour and her true form was on view. The mercenaries, in reality minor ruffians with no real adventuring experience, turned and fled, falling over each other in their haste to exit the room.

As one tripped, tentacles reached out of the portal, grabbed the luckless mercenary and dragged him screaming into the fire and down to the hellscape.

As the other fled, Franz grabbed a fallen sword. Swinging it, he sliced through a tentacle and, frantically looking through the flames, could see Beritz had been caught by the tentacles and was being dragged across the floor to the portal.

Heedless of his own safety, Franz rushed forward, hacking and slashing as best he could. Luckily the blade was magicked against demons and cleaved a path through the nearest tentacles.

As he reached Beritz he saw the old wizard was seconds away from being dragged down into the portal.

He leapt, swung hard and severed the demon arm nearest to him. As her arm fell to the ground, an unearthly scream came from the succubus and she collapsed back through the portal, dragging

Beritz with her.

As he fell, Beritz held out his hand to Franz who, dropping the sword, grabbed it and tried to pull him back, but momentum

worked against them. Beritz fell into the portal with Franz pulled down, half in the portal holding him, and half out, lying on the cold stone floor, trying not to slip down into the portal.

Then, in an vanished shut with sliced severing

explosion of magic, Beritz and the portal slammed a sickening sound as it through Franz's shoulder, his arm.

came around he was in When he private chambers. His body Beritz's with drugs and magic, but even was numbed through that he could feel the warm pulsing heat of his new arm.



It's a living demon arm grafted onto a human body. There isn't a culture in creation that looks upon that positively.

amage and Repairs

A living arm, it can be wounded but not damaged, although the connection with the body can be.

Anti-magic can cause the connection between the arm and the host body to cease. The solution is to move aware from the anti-magic zone, or if a spell has been cast, wait for it to pass.

Any spells or items that cause harm to infernal beings will hurt the arm and thus the host body. It might be possible to avoid this by picking up the item with the other hand. Only the demon arm part of the host is considered 'infernal'.

Whilst this is not Beritz's proudest moment, he has drunkenly confided in some fellow mages regarding what he did. There are now other examples out there which so far all share similar attributes. The one notable exception is the following:

Tentacle Limb: Properties: +2 Strength, +3 Intimidation, -2 Charisma. Abilities as listed on the right.

People ask me why Beritz didn't activate his escape magic before that point. Knowing him as 1 do, the drunken sot probably just forgot.

I'm not going to go as far as saying he's a disgrace to magic, but I will say he could have been a Power at one time. Squandered potential.

But that's what you get for spending too long with demons. They don't always take your soul, sometimes they just take your potential.





Other than Franz, all other examples of this 'enhancement' are extreme criminals or cultists. As such, someone sporting such a limb is most likely to be encountered in out of the way locations, or living/ hiding in the depths of a city. And they most likely won't be the nicest or most sane people in the world.



#### tats

Wondrous Item, rare (attunement required)

+1 Strength, +2 Intimidation, - 3 Charisma

#### **Abilities**

- 1. The arm has resistance to fire damage.
- 2. The hand is more dexterous than the other hand. (Advantage on one-handed Dexterity checks.)
- 3. The individual has advantage on any demon summoning rituals.

#### **Additional DM Notes**

Lots of potential to have the user 'dominated' or 'influenced' by the demonic part of their body.





# Phoenix Cage

istor

What do you do if you want to have a flying carpet but can't afford one, nor do you have the ability to make one for yourself?

Vladimir Jevic, AKA Vlad the Cruel, solved this dilemma by capturing and harnessing the powers of a phoenix.

A small-time mage with dreams of grandeur, his homeland had been at war with the neighbouring lands for many years. Due to the size of the country and the frequent flooding of the lands, travel cross-country was a slow process.

This meant responding to border incursions was difficult, and a full-scale invasion could take weeks to respond to.

Flight was key, and different solutions were put forward, including gryphon squadrons, harpy mercenaries and airships. High-value individuals, such as powerful mages and generals, also needed some form of specialised transport.

A large sum of money was put up as a prize for the best solution. Something that was fast, reliable, and ideally very portable.

Vladimir won the price with his cage. It was constructed so that it siphoned the magical energy and abilities from the creature trapped inside and transmitted them to an adjacent surface – in this case, a carpet.

Instantly, a flying carpet was created which wass fast, reliable, and capable of defending itself if necessary.

### Vladimir Jevic?

A truly unpleasant individual by all accounts. I never met him, but I have met people who have. Capable mage, although his ambition far outreached his capability.

Then again, I will admit that's hardly a unique flaw in us wizards.

And, before you ask, I have that picture on my wall for a reason.

One of my old mentors said a wise mage always keeps a reminder of who not to be.

1 thought it was either this or that demon head that 1 got from... well never mind where. The point is, this is a good example of bad magic — at least from the point of view of the general population.

Go against the general population often enough and no amount of wards or high towers will save you.

It's not about what you or I think is acceptable, it's what the world accepts. Always remember that.



putation

Some creatures, regardless of their real natures, catch the popular imagination. The phoenix bird is one such. Regardless of its dark magic and untrustworthiness, everyone likes them. That makes these items outlawed in all but the more uncivilised lands.



# amage and Repairs

The cage is robust, but containing the power of phoenix puts a strain on anything. And the carpet gets a lot of wear and tear.

#### When damaged

- Lightly Speed is reduced to 100 ft.
- Moderately The carpet loses the ability to change shape, and it needs a long rest every 8 hours.
- Heavily Using either Ability 3 or 4 creates a 20% chance that the phoenix will shatter the cage and escape. If that happens, the carpet will float to earth on the residual energy inside it.

Repairing Mending the cage requires a diamond and gold crystal case with ruby bolts, whilst the carpet takes the finest alpaca wool.

- Ruby Crystal Case This increases the speed of the carpet by 20 ft. and increases the damage from attacks by 50%, however it creates a 10% chance the phoenix will escape when an attack power is used.
- Steel or Iron Bolts There is a 5% chance each day that the phoenix will escape.
- Lamb's Wool The carrying capacity is reduced by 20%
- Sheep's Wool The carpet cannot change size.

This item relies on the unique properties of the phoenix, however the idea has been adapted using air elementals - speed reduced to 100ft., Ability 3 does not work and Ability 4 becomes a thunderburst attack and damage; pixies - speed reduced to 60ft., carrying capacity is reduced to 200lbs and a 4 x 4 carpet with a 4 hour flying time. Ability 3 changes to invisibility without causing damage and ability 4 does not work.



### ocation

At its height, Vladimir's country had dozens of these items, having scoured the earth for the creatures to power them. Most have broken and the phoenixes have escaped, but a few can still be found.



#### tats

Wondrous item, legendary

Fly 120 ft. Hover

#### **Abilities**

- 1. The owner can command the carpet to fly to them if it is within 20 ft.
- 2. The carpet can carry 1000 lbs and is 12 ft. x 12 ft. It can reduce its size upon verbal command down to 3 ft. x 3 ft if desired. It can fly for 12 hours before needing a long rest.
- The carpet and the person on it can become intangible and formed of fire. In this state, the carpet can move through a space as narrow as 1-inch wide without squeezing. Anyone within 10 ft. of the carpet when it is this state takes 2d6 fire damage. It can maintain this state for five minutes, during which time it is invulnerable to non-magical weapons although gains vulnerability to cold damage. The power recharges after a long rest.
- 4. The owner can siphon off phoenix energy and emit a fireball attack. This is aimed at any spot within a 300 ft. range and any creatures within a 25 ft. radius must make a Dexterity save or take 6d6 points of fire damage. The slows the carpet's speed by 10 ft. per attack. The slowdown clears after a long rest.



# Riss of the Queen

sistory

Those who deal in death for a living – assassins, warriors, mercenaries, etc. – know that death is but a sword stroke away. As such, it is common for them to worship the very thing they deal out daily – death.

The universe hears their worship, and whether the gods of death came before the prayers or after makes no difference. They exist. Dark deities that deal in the ending of things and find it good.

Dalma-Vadra, Goddess of Death, is one such deity. Her throne sits on a foundation of skulls, and around her palace are the shattered skeletons of a hundred thousand different warriors.

But for all that, she does not act as one might expect. She does not gloat at the fragility of mortals, she does not drink from the skulls of her enemies (well, not often), and she has a charisma and personality that is confidently and warmly disarming.

Her death games are legendary. Every decade, she puts forth a call for the greatest warriors in all the mortal realms to come to her palace and take part in them.

The contestants are pitted against each other and against deadly challenges of her own design. At the end of the contest there is a single winner. They are given the doubleheaded axe known as The Kiss of the Queen

She resurrects the fallen in the combat so as not to lose any healthy fighters – she isn't wasteful and she respects the courage of those who take part.

Outside of the games, there have also been exceptional occasions when a warrior has been so deadly that she has appeared to them in person and gifted them with an axe.





### eputation

Feared and lusted after, for some this is the ultimate weapon, celebrating the ultimate victory of death over all and celebrating the glory of it.



# amage and Repairs

A divine gift, it has never been known for the weapon to break. Lost and stolen, but never broken. However, Dalma-Vadra takes an interest in those who wield the blade. The degree of her satisfaction with them affects the power of the blade.

These bonuses stack within their half of the table, e.g. when she is unhappy, the individual is cursed with not being able to use ranged weapons *and* having their bonuses reduced. If she is very pleased, the character can enjoy the *three* positive blessings.

Very pleased	User can make a bonus move and attack after a kill	, t
Pleased	User always has the top initiative score	2
Satisfied	Item stat bonuses increase by 1	
Neutral	The owner cannot use ranged weapons	
Unhappy	Stat bonus <mark>es are redu</mark> ced by 1	- 0
Very unhappy	The owner cannot willingly retreat from a fight	



When an item has come from an avatar of death itself, you do not create copies. You pray to the gods you will not be on the receiving end, or you devise a scheme to acquire an original!

That said, the original has appeared in slightly different forms over the years – single-headed axes, scythes, halberds, even two-handed swords. Although most often as an axe.

#### Additional DM Notes

What would make her pleased or displeased was deliberately left out of this book. We thought it better for you to decide, based on your in-game pantheons.



### ocation

The few of these that exist are in the hands of the mightiest and deadliest warriors the world has ever known. Russ the Legend, retired now, has one on the mantle over his fireplace. It is said the queen visits him from time to time to talk about old battles. McRoth of Arvion used a single-headed version to win the freedom of his people and become High King. He disappeared into a time vortex with his axe and faithful companion years ago. And there are others, scattered around the earth...



#### tats

Weapon (varies), legendary (attunement required)
Cannot be used by divine creatures or characters.

- +2 Vorpal Blade, Two-handed weapon, heavy
- +2 Strength, +3 Intimidate

#### **Abilities**

- 1. The owner is immune to charm.
- Once per week the owner may attempt to commune with Dalma-Vadra. There is a 20% chance of this working. When it does, they may ask one question of the goddess, who may or may not reply. She is a goddess, after all; she can do what she likes.
- 3. A challenge for single combat can be made to any enemy within 60 ft. This challenge must be accepted. Once used, this power recharges after a short rest.
- 4. Once during the ownership of the blade, should the owner fail its third saving throw and be slain, the queen appears. She kisses the owner on their dead lips and breathes life into them again. They are fully restored to life and in prime health, with all negative conditions removed from them.



Wait. Before you start, I have a question. Don't look at me like that, it's a real one. I can show an interest, can't 1? I mean, if I can let Rutus magically sketch me, I can ask you a proper question about magic.

> What? First, he sketched you? When on earth did this happen? And secondly, magically sketched? What on earth do you mean?

Relax, it was just a couple of times. He wanted to sketch me when I was awake but I got bored sitting there, then he'd get grumpy and it wouldn't end well. So I suggested he sketch me whilst I was asleep. And he did, and it animated. I could even talk with myself. I didn't realise how witty I could be.

Didn't you say one of these items could do that?

It animated and you could talk with yourself? Had he been into the secure stores? Was he using one of the Milo canvases? I'll skin him alive...

Relax. Wow, for the cool guy you are getting pretty het up. Remember the guests are watching. He was just using normal parchment and a stubby old pencil. We knew he could work stone, but it seems that maze magic of his has given him other abilities. It's on the wall in the library in the Cavern of Dentropi if you really want to go see it. Now can I ask my guestion?

> Erm, sure. And yes, I will go take a look. Unexpected powers are unsettling; they make me uncomfortable...

Moving on. Listen to my question. Do you think that using magic for mundane actions, like some of these can be applied to, cheapens the impact of magic?

Okay, I'm impressed. That is a real question.

I take the view that a mundane task should be done in a mundane way. Want to sweep the floor? Get a broom.

But what if you want to sweep fifty floors? Or what if the floors were on fire, or the gravity shifts from room to room.

It's those situations where a magical broom is acceptable in my mind.

The items in here do a range of things. Some are for enhancing natural talent - Wild Bow of Ross, Milo Canvasses and Pip's Pipe are examples. Then we have a divine item compelling people to act in a more moral way or suffer the consequences, potions that enable the drinker to do the materially impossible, a construct that mimics life, another that is a form of life.

These items are justified. Whether enhancing or drawing on greater powers, all the items in here enable the materially impossible to happen. Okay, all except for the damned cat.

But that's magic.

Now you stay here. I'm off to the cavern.

You are such a worrier, no wonder you are single. That and the grey robes. Oh, and I like the cat. Soliri and I would have got on well.

Abrina



# Charm of Soliri

istory

Soliri was a fey witch and a daughter of a minor royal house. Her mother died in childbirth, and her father was a strict man with lofty ambitions for the future of their house. When her father discovered that she had been seeing a dark elf ambassador's son and was considering eloping with him, she was confined to a remote tower and forbidden to receive visitors for a year. The solitude would, her father stated, help teach her the importance of keeping the right company.

Knowing the futility of begging against her confinement, her only request was that she be allowed to take into the tower a figurine of a cat that had belonged to her mother. Seeing no harm in it, her father acquiesced.

Many would have gone mad under such confinement, but Soliri was as strong-willed as she was independently minded. And she had a plan. She laboured over her spells and enchantments and all was quiet for months.

At the stroke of midnight, on her two hundredth night of captivity, an explosion of magical energy was seen to come from the top of the tower. The guards investigated and found Soliri unconscious on the floor surrounded by bed sheets covered in magical symbols.

Whilst her wounds were tended, the sheets were destroyed and all writing materials removed from the tower.

Her father came to see her to find her in bed. swathed in bandages but conscious and recovering, cradling the figurine of the cat. He fiercely forbade her to practise her arts until her captivity was complete before taking his leave of her. To his surprise, Soliri agreed to this new punishment without protest, all the while stroking the figurine of the cat in her hands.

It is said that when the time came for her to leave her tower she strode out, confident and alert, followed by a beautiful black cat with stardust shimmers in its fur. Other versions of the story say that in fact two cats left the house.

Whatever the truth, it is well known that Soliri never returned home, but there were many sightings of a fey witch and a dark fey noble travelling the countryside, often accompanied by a beautiful black cat.

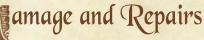
Cats are everywhere, and now we are going to make more of them? Brilliant.

You might think this a cute item, but wait until you let an important prisoner escape because of one. Not so cute then, I can assure you.



### eputation

It makes for a good story, and who doesn't like cats? People like this item, although some of the stories attributed to it probably involve real cats.



Chips and scuffs are the most common damage.

#### When damaged

- Moderately There is a 50% chance that the cat will appear but be very anti-social.
- Heavily There is a 50% chance that no cat appears. A further attempt can be made after a short rest. When it does appear, there is a 50% chance it will be anti-social.

Repairing Dark stone or gems work best.

- Lighter stone The cat appears but is timid and inclined to hide.
- Lighter gems The cat appears but is almost silent, preferring to walk around quietly.

Widely copied, as the charms do get broken and overused. Some accounts tell of familiars knocking them off tables and smashing them on purpose. The **Charm of the Hound** is a rival item that is preferred by dog-loving mages. It operates in the same way.



### ocation

A very human-centric item. The other races do not share the humans' love of cats (although lizardkin do like them lightly fried and with a spicy sauce.) Some mages have even been known to activate the charm for company. When Cassandra of the Nine Masks was falsely imprisoned on charges of treason, she had this item on her when captured. She sneaked it past the guards and said later that the daily antics of the charm kept her going in her solitary confinement.



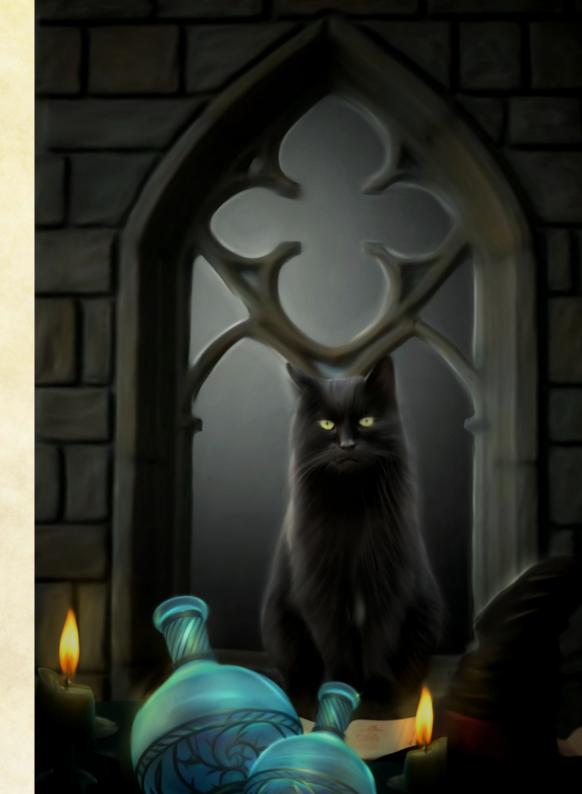
#### Wondrous Item, common

#### **Abilities**

This magic item comes in the shape of cat ornament in either obsidian or a similar dark material. When activated (command word spoken and the figurine's head rubbed), an apparition of a beautiful black cat appears within 5 feet of the ornament. The cat mews loudly and forcibly, seeking attention from anyone in the room.

Anyone viewing the cat must make a DC 20 Wisdom check or be captivated by the animal and ignore everything else in the room. On a success, they are still aware of other events in the room but have disadvantage on any Perception, Investigation or Insight checks.

The cat can be touched and feels like a real one. The apparition lasts for 1d4 x 5 minutes. At the end of that time it slowly fades away, purring loudly. Once used, the power cannot be used until the following day.



# Milo Canvas

istory

Milo Idomar was a half-elf painter, mage and outcast. He would have accepted none of those titles though. In his own words, he was 'just a creative soul in pursuit of magic'.

His works of art are amongst the most highly valued, and copied, pieces from the Opal Dynasty, that rare period of one hundred years where art was more highly prized than gold and it is said more art was painted and drawn during that time than any century before or since.

Even today, the story of his final act – gathering together fifty pieces of his work and burning them on a hilltop overlooking the Sea of Visions – is enough to make some art collectors shed a tear. (Even the ashen fragments of his work from that day are highly sought after.)

His most highly prized paintings of all are those done on his special canvases. Over these, people have fought and died.

The art purists want to keep them, preserve them in their current state. The mages want to take the canvases and use them, as they argue Milo would have wanted them to have been used.

Indeed, they state that his burning of his art, just before taking his own life, indicates that he didn't value his art. They point out that none of the canvases burned that day were his special ones.

The artists counter this by saying that the mages fail to understand that he was an innovative artist and his last act of burning his work was an act of artistic expression. He was sending a signal about the futility and intransigence of beauty.

Needless to say, the mages and the artists fail to agree on this point and Milo continues to be a controversial figure long after his death. The only point that people agree on is that everyone wants to own one of his canvases.





### eputation

A rare and exciting item. The acquisition of one is typically a cause for a celebration and a fancy party to show off the canvas.

# amage and Repairs

Even with care, canvases get torn and artwork smudged.

#### When damaged

- Moderately Ability 2 does not work.
- **Heavily** The animation for Ability 1 only lasts 5 minutes.

Repairing These are impossible to repair effectively, and as a canvas gets too damaged for the owner's needs they will likely purchase a copy or send parties out looking for another original.

To give you an idea of the repairing difficulty, the original canvases are made from thread spun by crystal spiders and soaked in the Rivers of Memory in the Realm of Chaos before being stretched and pinned to an alder wood frame with pins made from shards of sphinx claws.



It is too interesting an artefact for people to have not copied it. The copies tend to be less articulate and require a closer likeness to the original person to function. In a strange twist, an orc artist-mage, Wartol the Multicoloured (genuinely his name), created a version where the more abstract the reproduction the more likely the canvas would work. Unfortunately, his canvases only worked for him, and as he vanished during a dungeon delve they have been relegated to the archives of the collectors who have them.



### ocation

From elven mages to grieving dwarf husbands, anyone with the wealth and imagination, or motivation, to speak with a copy of a person they knew well wants to have one of these. Additionally, whilst it is harder to create an accurate enough likeness of a famous but personally unknown individual, that does not stop researchers and mages from trying. Given both of the above points, these can be found across the world, carefully secured away in locked rooms.

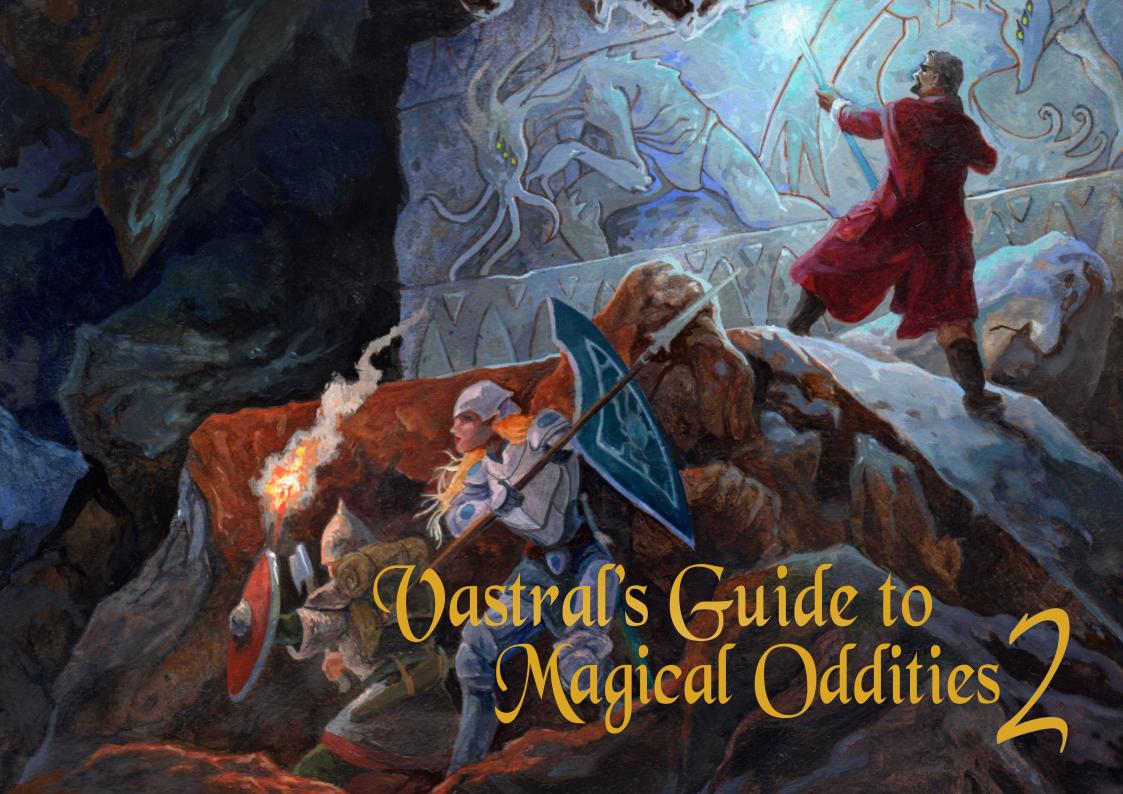


#### tats

#### Wondrous item, rare

#### **Abilities**

- 1. When the likeness of a known person is realistically reproduced on the canvas, it animates and can talk with the people in the room. For this ability to work, whilst the canvas is being painted, someone in the room must have known the subject of the painting. For example, if a husband wishes to have the canvas animate a picture of his wife, he must be in the room whilst the painter is doing their work. The animation lasts for 15 minutes. Once it ceases, the painting must be over-painted with white chalk paint, left for a week, and then the canvas can be reused.
- 2. The likeness of a famous person can be reproduced on the canvas. If painted realistically enough it can talk with the people in the room. The animation lasts for 15 minutes. Once it ceases, the painting must be over-painted with white chalk paint, left for a week, and then the canvas can be reused. The famous person can only be animated once on any Milo canvas. (All the famous people have been done.)



ents	Items for Animal Compa	nions	Items to Wear
nt	Armour of Amelian	10	Adam's Belt
00	Castro Harness	12	Amulet of Triskelion
	Harness of Growth	14	Armour of the Ape
	Headpiece of Speed	16	Armour of Reflection
	Saddle of Pacification	18	Armour of Thorns
	Adventure Hooks	20	Apis Fire Pendant



Adam's Belt	24
Amulet of Triskelion	26
Armour of the Ape	28
Armour of Reflection	30
Armour of Thorns	32
Apis Fire Pendant	34
Biscuit Shield	36
Boots of Occasion	38
Four Winds Waistcoat	40
Gloves of Sophia	42
Lightning Boots	44
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00	Tattoos	
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	Tattoo of Connection	7:
	Tattoo of Misdirection	8
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	Tattoo of Stoicism	8
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# TEMS-FOR MMAL MPANIONS

So, how does this work? Do we just chat about the items together so our guests know about them?

Technically, whilst you are off the kill list you aren't really supposed to be here, so I'll talk about the items and you —

Stand here and look ...

Intimidating, scary, vampire-like?

Never hurts to start with pretty.

Erm....

Ha, that's not our relationship, is it? Relax. I'm just setting expectations. You be all knowledgeable and talk about the items and I'm going to make... comments.

Times like this 1 -

Too late. I'm here now. I'll play nice. Go on; are we starting with animal items again?

A is for animal after all.

Or, where I grew up, for anaconda.

Okay, I don't know what to say to that, except no items for snakes in here. You don't tend to get them, although the snake people make some for themselves of course. Maybe another field trip is in order.

Anyway, this time we talk about armour for flying reptiles, Armour of Amelian. It has some very sensible safety magic built in.

The Castro Harness is a workhorse piece of magic — which is a joke you will get when I explain the item. Then we talk about the infamous Hancott O'Grady.

### The ant guy?

No, wasps. You might be thinking of someone else. What about Sir Redmayne of House Scarlet. You know him?

Erm, the one the bards sing about in The Ballad of Sir Redmayne? Catchy tune. Doesn't end well though, does it.

No, although I've heard rumours that what happened at the end was more nuanced than it seems. And talking of endings, no one knows what happen to the creator of our last item for animals, the Saddle of Pacification, although you will be able to guess when I tell you the story.

# Armour of Amelian

sistory

Amelian Cooper-Well was the founder of the Order of Trinity. Their philosophy was complex, embracing more than one area of activity. Not for them the split between the martial and the magical. They were comprised of people adept at both. And who were willing to develop in both areas.

Such people are always rarer than people who specialise in one side of another, so the order remains small in number even to this day.

Whenever they are encountered, however, they can be expected to be supremely competent both in martial feats and in the ways of magic. Additionally, they will often deploy items of advanced magic in ways that other people do not.

This armour is one such item. Some people think this is two items, but actually it is one item split into two parts.

The first part is worn by the rider, their magic engraved with runes of air and flight. The second part, worn by the mount, contains matching runes and additional runes of control and direction.

It is worth noting that the runes on the mount's armour do not pacify it as the Saddle of Pacification does (see next entry). It was found that such runes interfered with the flying runes. As those are the most important ones for this item, the order took a simple and practical approach and combined magic with non-magic. That is, they bred and trained their flying mounts specifically to be obedient to their riders.

This rearing and training is the same thing that often happens with gryphons, and indeed the order has those as well as the flying lizard pictured here.

The matching runes mean that should the flyer be knocked from their mount, then as long as their companion lives, their descent becomes controlled and much safer.

An important feature, I think we can all agree.



### eputation

Many military individuals think flying such a creature into battle is frivolous and ultimately counterproductive. (The rider and mount tend to get targeted by the enemy.) However, for those who want to fly such a creature, these are much sought-after devices.



### amage and Repairs

Given that these are often used on creatures used in warfare, they are often damaged.

### When damaged

- Slightly Ability 3 only lasts for 3 minutes.
- Moderately As above, and Ability 2 only works once per day.
- **Heavily** As above, and the AC bonus is reduced by 1 for both the mount and rider.

**Repairing** It is more about the runes that are used than the materials. The quality of the rune work will influence the abilities:

- Basic quality The DC check for falling is increased by 2.
- High quality Once per day the DC check against falling can be made with advantage. Also the AC bonus for the rider continues for 1 minute after dismounting.



Flying a fantastic beast into battle makes for a fabulous story, but the practical risks are enormous. This armour is one attempt at a solution. Another solution, possible inspired by the armour, is the elven **Stirrups of Safety**. They function as this item does, however Ability 1 is a fixed DC 11 Strength save and they do not have Ability 3.



### ocation

Universally prevalent when flying creatures into battle or for other reasons. Some adventurers like them, although the cost can be prohibitive unless they are going to be put to considerable use. The flying species such as harpies find them mildly amusing.



### tats

Wondrous item, rare (attunement by the mount and rider)

+2 AC to both rider and mount independently. Once the rider dismounts, they lose their AC bonus.

### **Abilities**

- Regardless of what happens to the mount or rider, the rider has a fixed DC 15 Strength save vs. falling\*.
   This is in addition to any other saves.
- 2. Once per short rest, the mount can make an immediate save against any condition affecting it.
- 3. Should the rider fall from the saddle, as long as the mount is conscious, the falling rider starts to glide and magically copy the motions of their mount. Any movements the mount makes, the falling (technically, now, flying) rider also makes. The only limitation is that the direction of travel must be downwards. (Turns etc. are fine.) This power lasts for five minutes. Should the rider still be airborne at that point, then they fall as per the normal rules of gravity.

\*Simply put, if the rider makes that save they manage to stay in the saddle even if they are unconscious, dying or otherwise having a bad day.

## ITEMS TO WEAR

### Biscuit Shield

istory

The smart hunter knows their prey, so says Logaar McVitie, leader of a northern clan of barbarians who have lived and hunted in the northern tundra for generations.

The winter wolves that occupy the snowbound plains are deadly and devastating hunters who like to knock down their foes before pouncing on them and finishing them off.

Logaar will point out that such behaviour is fairly obvious - all a hunter needs to do is observe the wolves in action. What takes more effort, but returns greater knowledge, is to observe them for longer. Watch them when they are not hunting but active with other things. In other words study them.

So whilst a visitor might hear Logaar say that a smart hunter knows their prey, they will also hear him continue on to say that a wise hunter studies their prey.

And it is through studying their prey, and some creative thinking and arcane magic, that one solution to the wolves' 'knock down and pounce' attack has been created by the McVitie clan.

It turns out that the winter wolves have a surprisingly highly developed sense of taste. This shield can be used against them as it is designed to be bitten by the wolves. Many hunters and rangers in the north owe their lives to the the resulting moments of distraction when the wolves chew on the shields, rather than their prone foes.

I met Logaar once. Gods, can that man drink. Well, I say that; his entire clan can drink. I'd been warned not to get drawn into a drinking contest with them, but just trying to keep up through the welcome banquet was a feat.

> You are a total lightweight. All that studying and no exercise. You have no stamina.

I resent that. I just have a slow metabolism and it takes a while for the alcohol to burn off.

> Slow metabolism? Priceless. Can't wait to tell Rutus that one. Now stop glaring and tell me about this biscuit shield. Sounds tasty.

Ha, that's what the wolves think, let me tell you...





### eputation

This is one of those magic items that gets dismissed out of hand or laughed at as a rural trinket by the scholarly academics and mages of the big cities. But then, they rarely venture out into the wilds so have little need for such things. For those who do, this can be a lifesaver, and they are popular amongst rangers, scouts and hunters in the northern lands.



An item that is designed to be damaged, it is rare to find a pristine example. Made with rune-etched steel and wood bonded with a honey butter resin, these shields exude an almost irresistible flavour when bitten into.

### When damaged

- Slightly The AC bonus is reduced by 1
- Moderately The AC bonus is reduced by 2
- Heavily As moderately damaged, and the DC for Ability 3 is reduced by 2.

### Repairing

- Iron The radius for Ability 2 is reduced by 50%.
- **Steel** On Ability 1, the effect is always that the beast is stunned for one turn.
- Mactar honey Instead of the normal honey and butter resin the shield is bonded with mactar honey. This doubles the distracting effects of the shield but reduces the AC bonus by 1.

opies

A lizardkin mage created a version of this shield for the local militia. The **Cyclopha Shield** has the same qualities as the above item, save it only has this effect on insectoid lifeforms. (Their tribe were in continual conflict with giant insects that had taken nest in the low swamplands.)



### ocation

Almost exclusively found in the northern territories. Magic item collectors in the southern lands will pay a good price for a pristine example of one of these. In some areas they are known as McVitie Shields.



### tats

Amour (any shield), uncommon (attunement required)

+3 AC

### **Abilities**

1. When a beast makes a bite attack against the carrier of the shield, if the beast's attack misses by 3 or less points then it has bitten into the shield. It must then make a DC 12 Charisma save. The degree by which it fails the save determines how distracted the beast becomes by the tastiness of the shield:

Miss By	Effect	
5 or more	The attacking beast is stunned for the next two turns*	
2 - 4	The attacking beast is stunned for the next turn*	
1	The beast lets go but is busy licking its chops and savouring the flavour of the shield. It has disadvantage on any attacks next turn and it cannot make opportunity attacks this turn.	

\*Whilst it is stunned, the beast has hold of the shield and the carrier counts as grappled unless they release the shield. On the turn after the stun ends, the beast attacks at disadvantage.

2. Once per day, the carrier of the shield can activate the shield to emit an aura of tastiness. Any beast within a 30-foot radius of the shield must make a DC 15 Charisma check or be irresistibly drawn to the shield and start to bite it for 1d4 rounds. They take no other actions during this time and count as stunned. The shield can then be thrown, or dropped, if desired whilst this ability is active.

## FURNITURE

### O'Brien Table

sistory

There is a quip that goes It takes a smart person to be really dumb. Magic users are often a shining example of this, whether they're the ones seduced by the succubus who they were only summoning 'to talk to', the ones turning themselves into liches to gain a few more years of power, or those worshipping ancient, trans-dimensional gods who anyone sane would run a mile from.

All in all, so smart, they are dumb.

And that was the thought that O'Brien had when he apprenticed with the great Mongrim of the Many Shades. Mongrim was high court mage in the court of the Silver King, a ruler whose kingdom unusually stretched far over both land and sea.

The kingdom had expanded rapidly under the leadership of the new king, and his armies were enhanced with magical items that Mongrim was in charge of crafting.

He had a team of mages working with him, and it is said by some that the Towers of Magic, situated on an isolated island, were, at their peak, the location of more magical construction than anywhere else on the earth.

O'Brien was one of a number of new apprentices that had been drafted in to assist with the increasing workload. Formerly a mage-smyth for a local mining complex, O'Brien had a reputation for innovative and practical solutions under pressure.

When he arrived in the Towers of Magic, it is said he laughed out loud at the chaos and confusion. There were no production quotas, no quality checks and no standardised tools to aid in the production of the items destined for the king's armies.

When he raised these points he was shut down by the mages, and Mongrim threatened to dismiss him if he heard more of such talk. They were mages, not common factory workers.

Undaunted, O'Brien began organising the other workers and apprentices behind the scene. He also began work on producing tools and items to aid in the construction of the magical items. He quietly started to slip these into the mages' workshops where the mages could come across them when needed and experience the benefits.

It wasn't long before these tools, and their effectiveness, became commented on. Some mages took credit for making them, others denied using them saying the results had come from their own methods, but Mongrim knew his fellow mages well enough to know this was not true. The search was on for their true creator.

Whilst they can be dumb, the smart can also be clever, and it wasn't long before O'Brien was identified.

Mongrim publicly berated him, but taking him aside privately praised him and asked what else he had. It was then that O'Brien unveiled the first of these tables...

eputation

The secrecy around these items has resulted in a general disbelief in them, with people assuming they are the stuff of story and legend only.



amage and Repairs

They can only be repaired by the mage that created them. All the copies that are known about have been robust enough not to require repairing.

Some observers have speculated that it would be possible to make an even more powerful version of this table, but that the mages don't so as not to draw unwanted divine attention. After all, if mortals can fashion artefacts as powerfully as the gods, then what separates the two groups?

It takes a long time to make one of these items and the material costs are exorbitant. As such, they will often be passed down from one high mage to another. For the most part they reside in court mage workshops or in the towers of the truly powerful.

There are rumours that the dark elves have what they call a **Tain Table** – it operates in the same way, except it can only produce items of clothing and armour. No examples of this have been confirmed.

ocation

Possession of one of these tables is always a closely guarded secret so as to prevent thieves from taking an interest in it – as they surely would. Mages also do not like to broadcast how they make things and are naturally secretive about their processes. As a consequence of both of the factors mentioned, these can be found in the hands of any race of creature but only ever secreted away.



### Wondrous item, legendary

### +3 intelligence (within 5 ft., of the item)

The table generates one charge each day unless it is resting, up to a number equal to the user's ownership level. For every charge used, the table must rest for one day. As many charges can be used per day as are available, and abilities can be used multiple times on the same day, each use costing the charge number listed.

### Abilities - First ownership level

- Repairing mundane items takes half as long as normal. (Zero charges and this ability can function when the table is resting.)
- 2. 5lbs of one base metal can be transmuted into another, e.g. lead to iron. (One charge)

### Abilities - Second ownership level

- Crafting mundane items takes half as long as normal. (Zero charges and this ability can function when the table is resting.)
- 2. Crafting an item with a +1 bonus takes half as long and requires half the *value* or half the *valume* of ingredients, e.g. where two 1000gp gems might normally be required, only two 500gp gems would be needed, or one 1000gp gem. (Two charges). Once used, this Ability cannot be used for 1d4 weeks.

### Abilities - Third ownership level

- 1. When crafting or repairing mundane items, half the raw ingredients are needed.
- Crafting an item with a +2 bonus takes half as long and requires half the value or half the volume of ingredients. (Three charges). Once used, this Ability cannot be used for 2d4 weeks.



### Abilities - Fourth ownership level

- 1. 1lb of one precious metal can be transmuted into another, e.g. silver to gold. (Three charges)
- Crafting an item with a +3 bonus takes half as long and requires half the value or half the volume of ingredients. (Four charges). Once used, this Ability cannot be used for 3d4 weeks.

### **DM Notes**

There was a temptation to go as far as transmuting base metals into gold, but conscious of the damage that could do to to your world's economy we did not provide that ability.

Were we to provide it, then it would at least be a 5th level of ownership ability with a time delay after use.

Also, it's nice to keep some things beyond the reach of even an item such as this one.

### DARKER STEWS

Okay, I still want to make the argument that these items could be put into the other sections rather than being marked out like this. You can do horrendous things with a Marionette of Kadin Mor; maybe we should put that in here?

You heard from your guests last time. They wanted to have items that had 'darker' uses, or that were frowned upon by society, placed in their own section. You agreed. Stop complaining.

I'm not complaining, I'm making a point. Magic doesn't have a moral compass in itself. It's an energy that can be used to make items that then are used for good or bad purposes, but to start labelling magic as 'bad' in itself is a dangerous road.

### What about necrotic magic?

You are only alive today because of it, so what would you say?

Good comeback. Okay, let's say we accept your point about magic being a neutral energy. These are still less socially acceptable than your other items, correct?

Yes, hence the section title, Darker Items. Not evil. Darker.

### Point made. What have you got?

Well, it's a very interesting one, the first one. The Banner of Sacrifice. The only item we are talking about today that gets more powerful the more battered and the older it is.

The Chalice of Souls, in principle, is a useful device to ensure that a specific ritual gets performed correctly, but I can see why people object to it, given that it's powered by souls.

The Cup of Delirium is ridiculous. I have zero sympathy for anyone who drinks from it and loses their mind. If it has a purpose in life, then it's to sort the foolish from the wise. Oh, and that's before we even talk about the fact that I'm almost completely convinced it's infernal in origin.

The Kissing Harp — well, I actually inherited one of these. No, I'm not saying who from or whether I've used it. I will admit, I find it a little disturbing, and I have mine tucked away under a tarp. I can see the value in it but...

1 knew someone who went after Toro. Classic old school assassin. Thought he could simply walk in and knife her in the back. I tried to warn him but he just paid for the Tyllu Blade and left. He didn't make it. I didn't get the blade back either. It was a shame. Nice finish to it.

### You are all heart.

Hey, I didn't make him go up to a legendary witch queen. I blame fairy stories. Make people think anything is possible.

Sometimes I forget why you never get a date, then you say something like that and I remember.

I'm going to ignore that. The next item, I will concede, is pretty... well... evil. Dagda's that notorious hag I was telling you about the other day. This book is connected to her in some fashion. Best left alone. And then you have the Wings of Zieglar. I'd love to see a set in the flesh, although I shudder to think of the mindset that is so devout that they endure the necessary rituals to have a pair of these wings fixed to them.

### Skull of Muab

istory

Muab was the appointed mage-ruler of the land of Zo, a mysterious land that exists in its own dimension. Access is only possible through a series of planar portals.

Having endured a number of incursions by hostile forces and entities over the years, Muab had ordered all of the portals sealed, and anyone seeking to leave the land had to get permission from him.

Unfortunately for Muab, the wild magic that created the land also ran wild on the borders, and whilst the portals were locked as he had decreed, the seals did not hold on one of the doors. This door led into the material plane, the entrance and exit point being housed inside a roaring tornado that continually blew.

Periodically, individuals and creatures would be caught up in the tornado and deposited in Zo.

One day, this event brought a harmless-looking young woman named Toro Dhy. By sheer accident, or possibly providence, as she proceeded into the land, confused and lost, she crossed paths with a number of leaders of a failed rebellion that Muab had quashed some time ago.

Outcasts from the castle, these rebels were disorganised and aimless, each mired in their own doubts and dejected from their defeat.

Individually, they were no threat to Muab, and

eager to avoid unnecessary violence he let them live whilst keeping them under surveillance.

Toro Dhy's arrival changed everything.

Uniting the formal allies and inspiring them to learn from their past mistakes, she forged an alliance that was to prove unstoppable.

Muab's most powerful ally, the Compass Witch, fell in battle, her flying monkey armies scattered and destroyed.

Taking magical silver shoes that had belonged to the Compass Witch, Toro and the rebel leaders assembled a strike force with the plan to find and assassinate Muab himself.

Using the shoes, Toro commanded a force of crows to swarm the castle and blind the guards.

With the guards distracted, she and her allies descended down into the old tunnels that ran under the castle, emerging through a secret exit that, ironically, was intended as a means of escape for Muab.

Bursting into his private chambers, the rebels attacked Muab. He resisted valiantly, if briefly. As it became apparent that he was outmatched, he attempted to surrender, offering to leave Zo and go into exile.

Little did he know his opponent.

It is said that the rebels got their first glimpse of the real Toro when she laughed in Muab's face as her poisoned dagger found his heart.

And thus the dark rule of the witch queen Toro Dhy began. As for Muab's skull, it adorned the castle wall on a spike for a month before it was picked clean by the birds and Toro turned it into the dreaded item that is presented here.







### putation

To the undead, these are the source of much pride as necrotic powers have corrupted magical ones. Everyone else feels they are an abomination.



### amage and Repairs

Used in combat, it can get battered, and the power flowing through it is considerable.

### When damaged

- Slightly Wraiths cannot be summoned.
- Moderately As above, and it takes a turn before the undead are summoned.
- Heavily As above, and Ability 2 can only be used once per day.

Repairing The original item can be repaired, but the copies cannot be. They are discarded once ineffective, and a new one is created or purchased. It takes the skull of a powerful mage to make the item.



Effective as it is, there are currently no variations of this item.



### ocation

They will only be found in the hands of those who would use them. They are outlawed in most lands, and whilst some collectors might have one, that will likely be damaged and certainly not out on general display.



Wondrous item, legendary (attunement required)

+3 Arcana, +2 Charisma, +3 Intimidation

### **Abilities**

- 1. The holder is immune to radiant damage whilst carrying the item.
- Once per short rest the holder can trigger a green mist to flow from the skull. It expands to cover an area 120 feet in radius. The mist lasts for 15 minutes. The effects within the smoke depend on the proximity to the skull.

120-ft. radius - Undead in the area regenerate 5 hit points per turn 60-ft. radius - As above, and undead gain resistance to radiant damage

30-ft. radius - As above, and undead gain a bonus basic weapon attack per turn.

10-ft. radius - As above, and living creatures within the area take 10 points of necrotic damage

3. Three times a day (see below), using an action, undead creatures can be raised from the ground. The appear randomly in a 30-foot radius of the skull user and roll for Initiative, taking actions on the following turn. Roll an Arcana check to determine the number and type of creatures raised:

0 - 10	Skeletons x 1d4	
11 - 14	Skeletons x 1d6	
15 - 20	Skeletons x 1d6 plus zombies x 1d4	
21 - 24	Zombies x 1d6 plus zombie ogres x 1d4	
25 - 29	Wraiths x 1d4	
30+	Roll twice, rerolling any 30 + result	

The user can trade one of the daily uses to reroll how many creatures appear that turn. They can decide this after rolling them the first time.



#	Name and Occupation	Age and Species
1	Toro Dhy, Witch Queen	Adult, Human
	Physical Description	

Her long black hair and lithe female body is in sharp contrast to her green skin and penetrating, soulless eyes that look out from under the brim of her hat. With a cackling laugh and dismissive manner, she is quick to anger and slow to forgive.

### Character Further Details

She expects adoration, respect and servitude from all she speaks with and is quick to punish those who speak out, contradict her or interrupt her. The wise wait for their moment to speak.

From a long line of witches, her magical power had stayed inside her, latent, until woken by the wild magic that transported her to Zo. She remembers little of her previous life and cares not. She is ruler of all she surveys and relishes it.

### **Items or Clothing**

She wears a pair of silver shoes that grant her control over the beasts of Zo. She can command flocks of birds or vicious flying monkeys, although she can only do so three times before a blood sacrifice is required. The shoes must be submerged in the blood of a sacrificial victim – ideally a young virgin. The person who is to wear the shoes must perform the ritual and kill the victim.

### Occupation

Witch Queen – Having violently seized power, she has spent years solidifying her hold and putting down any and all opposition. The rebel generals who stood by her side when she killed Muab have all since turned away from her and paid the ultimate price. She has their skulls preserved and placed inside crystal cabinets. These reside in her war room in the heart of her castle, a lesson to any of her other generals who might have second thoughts about who is in charge.

Occasionally she ventures forth from Zo, visiting one of the other planes of reality – the mortal plane being her favourite place to visit. She goes to gather information or magic items or sometimes just to enjoy herself – the chaos her undead armies can cause makes her exceptionally happy. She has twice been slain on the mortal plane, but her spirit travels back to a crystal coffin in her castle where she reforms and revives. What price she paid for such magic is unknown.



### Each Book 196 pgs

### **Feedback**

Vastral's Guide to Magical Oddities and Vastral's Guide to Magical Oddities 2 might be my favourite magic item compendiums for any edition of D&D.

Mark Poles, Owner, Shop on the Borderlands

Absolutely beautiful product.

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An awesome addition to my collection of resources.

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It's gorgeous.

~ Backer Volume 1~

I particularly like the choice of font and the organised, airy layout. Wonderful product.

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What I like about your work, it gives us enough of a boost to get the creative juices churning, but then like a proud parent you watch us go off into the worlds of our own creation on a bike without stabilisers...

~ Backer Volume 2 ~

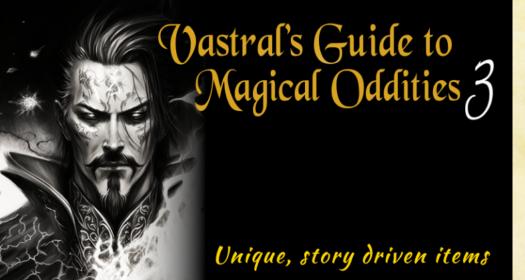
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